

"Restoration"

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[0:00] Well, good morning. It's an exciting morning. We're going to have a baptism at the end of the service. That's something to look forward to. I want to begin this morning by asking you a question.

If you wanted to believe in God, what sign would you want to see him do to convince him to believe? To convince you to believe. Woody Allen famously in The New Yorker said, if only God would give me some clear sign like making a large deposit in my name and a Swiss bank account. But seriously, maybe you would want to see the end of food scarcity in the world. Maybe you would want to see a celestial fireworks show of shooting stars.

Maybe you'd want to hear God speak to you with an audible voice. Or maybe you would want him to heal a broken relationship or a broken leg. It's not hard to imagine what might be a significant and meaningful sign for us.

But this question brings us to our passage this morning. Here at Trinity, we preach through books of the Bible and we're preaching through the book of Acts. And we are in chapter 3 of the book of Acts this morning.

[1:20] If you want to turn there, it's either page 857 or 868, depending on the printing of your Bible. So you should be able to find it there. And what we see in the book of Acts is about what God does after the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

How he is at work through his people building his church in the world. And specifically this morning, we're going to see God do a great sign and wonder.

And to meditate on what we ought to learn from this this morning. So let me pray as we look at God's word together and ask God's help. Lord, we thank you this morning for your word.

We thank you that in it you have revealed yourself to us. Lord, that we are not left grasping or wondering or hoping that we might know you. But you have made yourself known.

And Lord, in your word, we pray that you would help us this morning to see you more clearly. To know you. Lord, may our minds be awakened to know the truths of who you are.

[2:23] May our hearts be set aflame to love you as we ought to. Lord, I pray for your help that you would help me to speak as I ought with clarity.

And Lord, in dependence upon you that we might together sit under and be blessed by your word this morning. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Amen. In this story, chapter 3 of the book of Acts, we're going to see that God does a great work to show us three things.

He's going to show us a great sign. He's going to show us a great name. And He's going to show us a great Savior. So instead of reading through the whole thing, we're going to read it through in chunks.

So let's begin by looking at a great sign. Starting in verse 1, we'll read 1 through 10 together. Acts chapter 3.

[3:20] Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the beautiful gate, to ask alms of those entering the temple.

Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, look at us.

And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, I have no silver or gold, but what I do have, I give to you.

In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up, he stood

and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God, and recognized him as the one who sat at the beautiful gate of the temple asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

[4:36] These verse 10 verses are a story of a great sign that God did. Peter and John were on their way up to the temple. This is where they would go.

In the very beginning of Christianity, they would go to the temple, because this is where God's people historically had gathered. And these followers of Jesus were going there to continue that practice.

And they run across a man who is in very obvious need. The text is clear. He was lame from birth. This had been his whole life, being carried into public places where he could ask for help, for food or for money or whatever it is.

And he asked them. You know, you can imagine, because we see this in New Haven sometimes, people sitting on the streets asking for help. You can imagine how the streams would pass him by. No one would pay attention.

Peter and John heard him, and they focused their attention on him. And he asked for the help that he thought he would get. He wasn't even asking for healing. He was just asking for a bite to eat or a dollar to get some food.

[5:42] Right? And Peter and John say, we don't have a lot of money either. We don't have anything to give you. But what we do have, we will give to you.

In the name of Jesus, rise and walk. And God, in that moment, worked. That man was healed instantly and fully.

Peter and John grabbed him and pulled him up. And a man who had never walked suddenly had ankles and feet that were strengthened so that he could not only walk, but he could leap with joy and go into the temple for the first time on his own power to worship God.

What an amazing thing. And it was so amazing that it wasn't just he who saw this or Peter and John, but all the crowd, the people around were amazed and full of wonder.

Isn't that the guy who never walked? And now suddenly here he is walking and praising God. God's supernatural intervention is a great sign.

[6:55] God's supernatural intervention is a great sign. Probably many of those seeing this would have thought about the passage that Christina read earlier from Isaiah 61, talking about when the coming of the Messiah and the new season of God's blessing would come.

It would come with someone who would bring a renewal and a restored world. The words that were read earlier from Isaiah was what Jesus read in Luke chapter 4 when he began his ministry.

He said, in me, these scriptures are fulfilled. I have come to do these things that the lame will be healed, that the blind will see, that the captives will be set free.

This picture of restoration, that the Messiah would come and bring that. All right, I have to admit, I watch videos on YouTube every once in a while.

And if you've ever seen SB mowing videos, okay, it's this guy who does landscaping. But what he does is he goes to places for free when he sees a completely overgrown yard that's just a complete mess.

[8:01] And he goes and knocks on the door and said, can I restore your yard for you? And he then goes and he cleans the sidewalk. He discovers sidewalks that you can't even see because they've been buried under dirt.

He cuts down grass that's like three feet high. And this complete jungle of a mess, at the end of the video, is restored to this beautiful thing.

Friends, this is just a taste of what Jesus has come to do. And the apostles get to be a part of it. We see this restoring work in Jesus' ministry as he healed the sick and he gave sight to the blind, as he even raised people from the dead.

We see it in the apostles' ministry. It's already been mentioned in chapter 2, verses 43, that they did many signs and wonders. And we'll see it continuing. Paul will continue to do it in the book of Acts. So here's the question that we wrestle with, don't we? Should we expect God to be doing these things today? All right. This is going to be a bit of an aside.

[9:11] All right? Here we go. First of all, the question is, can God do this? Of course he can. The God of the universe who made everything, if he wants to do something supernatural, of course he

can do this.

God is not bound. He is not unable. Right? Does God still do this? That's the second question. Well, yes, I think we have to say he does do this.

Right? Because we see that people have been healed and are being healed. Now, okay, here's another rabbit trail. Healing is an amazing thing, though, under God's sovereignty.

Right? Because how does God heal? Every time our white blood cells fight off an infection, God is healing us. Every time a broken bone heals, God is healing us.

Every time medicine fights back cancer and puts us in remission, God is healing us. And sometimes God steps in, and beyond any what we would consider normal or natural means of ways that we've seen God create a world that heals, he intervenes like he did in this man's life.

[10:22] And he made strong ankles and feet where there had never been. And God does this.

And I know, as I look out among you, some of you have experienced this.

You've seen babies in utero knit together when they weren't together. You've seen chronic disease lay waste to your life and then be restored.

You've seen cancers go into remission unexpectedly and gloriously. God does still heal. And he does it supernaturally some of the time.

So now we come back to the question I asked. Should we expect God to work in these particular supernatural sign-like ways?

Now this is a big conversation in the church. Some people would say that these signs were given particularly to the apostles as they were beginning the work of the ministry of the church, as they were preaching God's word and establishing the church.

[11:27] One of the reasons they argue this is you see that there's lots of this at the beginning of the book of Acts, but as you go along it, they seem to fade in relationship to other works of God among his people of evangelism and discipleship, of sanctification and salvation, right?

So some people have thought, no, that was just for the apostles. Other people have thought, well, God does continue to do this, but particularly in places where the gospel is just starting out, where there's a particular need or desire for authentication of the message that's being verbally proclaimed, just like it was here in Acts, but also we see this in other parts of the world, in new places, right?

So this is another argument that some people in the church have put forth, that it does happen, but really we should expect it where the gospel is taking new ground, where it's reaching new cultures and new peoples and new places where the church is not yet established.

Some people would argue, yes, this does continue, and they would point to things like 1 Corinthians 12, which lists healing as one of the gifts in the body of Christ, or James 5, where it says, if any of you are sick, call the elders and pray that you may be healed.

So there's a breadth of understanding about this. So how do we navigate this? How do we navigate this? Here's what I want to go to.

[12:53] I want to say this pastorally. We should neither deny nor elevate these signs of healing in our church, right?

Some of you have experienced them, and it's so wonderful. You just want everyone to experience the same thing. But listen, as I look out here, I also know that some of you have walked, sorry, have walked the hard road of sickness that leads to death.

Some of you even now are experiencing chronic disease, and God hasn't healed that. Some of you have experienced deep loss as you've seen this happen.

And so we need to hold these things together as we do this. Neither elevate nor deny. Why do I say this? Well, I have three reasons, right? First, it's because in the weight of the Christian life and in the scriptures, it's not these supernatural signs that are the key to spiritual growth, life, or maturity. It's knowing Christ. It's growing in Godliness. It's transformed character. It's all sorts of other things that have to do with God convicting us of sin and changing our hearts so that we love Him more than sin, and these sorts of things.

[14:15] This is what we see as the normal Christian life. Right? So that's the first reason. The second reason is that the sign of healing, the wonderful, is temporary because the man who was healed in the temple still died.

Right? And this is the one thing that we've never been able to see God transform. All of us, our bodies will decay and die until the final resurrection.

Right? And so we recognize that even something as wonderful and as miraculous as this healing for this man was temporary. And the third reason is because I believe that this passage itself says that as great as this healing was, it was pointing to something greater.

If you want to look for someone who has great perspective on healing, I recommend Johnny Erickson Tada. If you have not read her books, she has a book called When God Weeps. She has another book called A Place of Healing.

She became a quadriplegic through a diving accident when she was a teenager and then wrote particularly A Place of Healing. Forty years later, she was experiencing both debilitating chronic pain, which is odd for a quadriplegic, but there it was.

[15:36] And she ended up getting cancer in the middle of it. God has preserved her through all these things. This is what she writes about how she prays. Yes, I pray that my pain might be removed, that it might cease, but more so, I pray for the strength to bear it, for the grace to benefit from it, and the devotion to offer it up to God as a sacrifice of praise.

For all the concentration I can muster in prayer, I must not dissipate it in seeking physical blessings only. Rather, I must spend a good portion of it seeking spiritual growth and praying for Christ's kingdom to go forth into this dark world.

For such prayers are a way for me to know God and to know Him deeper, higher, richer, wider, and fuller, more fuller than if I comfortably cruise through life in my wheelchair.

So yes, pray. Pray for God's healing because He does work. But neither elevate it nor deny it in your heart because when God does this, it is meant to give us a foretaste.

It is a sign of something else. Right? You know what signs are. You know, when you're driving to New Haven, there are those green signs that point you to if you want to go to the courthouse, you go this way.

[17:03] If you want to go to Yale University, go that way. If you want to go to the art museum, go that way. A sign points to a destination and Peter has a destination in mind as he begins then to respond to what he's seeing in the next section of our passage.

So let's look at it briefly. We're now in verses 11 through 16 of Acts chapter 3. Let's read it together. While he clung to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's, astounded.

And when Peter saw it, he addressed the people. Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this? Or why do you stare at us as though by our own power or piety we've made him walk?

The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our forefathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate when he had decided to release him.

But you denied the holy and righteous one and asked for a murderer to be granted to you. And you killed the author of life whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.

[18:18] And his name, by faith in his name, has this man strong, has made this man strong whom you see and know. And the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

Peter sees the amazement of the crowd. They're wondering, how could this happen? And he wants to clarify. The first thing he says is, this is not about us. This is not about me and whether I healed you or not.

Right? He says, it's not my, I have no intrinsic ability to do this. But instead, he says, it is the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob who did what?

Glorified this man, Jesus, by raising him from the dead. And he goes to the end, he says, and it is in the name of Jesus that this man has been healed.

Right? Now, what is a name? Right? We think about a name, it's just like what you put on your, you know, name tag or something like that. But in the Bible, the name has more significance.

[19:32] A name signifies someone's power and authority. Kind of like in the old days in the movies where they say, open up in the name of the king. Right? They have authority and power to open that door.

They're asking the person to open it nicely, but if they won't, they'll break it down because they have the authority to do that. Right? Right? And in verses 13 through 15, Peter's unpacking the richness of what Jesus' name signifies.

Right? He is the one who has been glorified by the God of Israel by raising him from the dead. And he sets this in contrast. You denied him.

You didn't ask for him but asked for a murder instead. You killed him who is the author of life, who by the resurrection of the dead is able to give life to people and you killed him.

But God raised him up and God is the one who made him this glorious savior, this wonderful name by which we may be healed. And so Peter's first thing that he wants to tell these people about this healing is not about the healing.

[20 : 43] It's not about how to get there. It's not how to get more. It's about Jesus and it's about the name of Jesus, the exalted, resurrected one whom God affirmed.

That he is not merely a healer of sickness or a defeater of evil but more centrally he is a defeater of sin and death and a king who brings an eternal kingdom of life that we get to taste now maybe in healing, more certainly in joy, and hope.

So this is what Peter says to us in verses 11 through 16 is what is this healing about? It's about Jesus and the name of Jesus and then he expands on this understanding even more so, right?

So when we get to verse 17 we're going to read this. We're going to see this expansion where it's not only a great name but a great savior. So let's read this section together.

Verses 17 and following. And now brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance as did your rulers but what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets that his Christ would suffer he thus fulfilled.

[22 : 01] Repent therefore and turn again that your sins may be blotted out that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.

Moses said the Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you and it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.

And all the prophets who have spoken from Samuel and those who came after him also proclaim these days you are the sons of the prophets and the covenants that God made with your fathers saying to Abraham in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

God having raised up his servant sent him to you first to bless you by turning in every one of you from your wickedness. So in this last section after doing the healing and then claiming that this is fundamentally about Jesus he now confronts the people and remember he's preaching to a primarily Jewish audience.

He's in the temple preaching to people who were almost certainly almost all Jewish people. Right? And he's saying to them this Jesus is not only the name he didn't spring out of nowhere in history but instead he is the fulfillment of everything that you have known as Jewish people about what God is doing in the world.

[23 : 46] He is the fulfillment to believe in him and trust in him because he is the fulfillment. And then he unpacks this incredible picture. Right? This passage is actually really weird.

You're like where is he going? He's all over the Old Testament. He's mentioning Samuel and Moses and Abraham and all the prophets. He's saying where is he going? Right?

Well what he's saying is Jesus is the fulfillment and he paints really briefly but beautifully this Old Testament tapestry of God's redemptive promises.

And so I want to lead you through that really briefly this morning as we close as we look at this.

Right? One of the things he does you see in verse 13 and then again in verse 26 what does he call Jesus?

He calls him my servant. Now if you were a first century Jew that would ring bells to think of the prophet Isaiah who talks about the suffering servant in chapters 42 through 55 and in the central most clear passage about who this suffering servant is and what he would do we see in Isaiah 53, 46 we'll put it up on the screen so you can see it together he says this about the suffering servant surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows yet we esteemed him stricken smitten by God and afflicted but he was pierced for our transgressions he was crushed for our iniquities upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with his wounds we are healed all we like sheep have gone astray we have turned everyone to our own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all friends this is the centerpiece of the fulfillment that Jesus came and lived a perfect life and then died on the cross for sins he was pierced he was crushed he was killed why?

[25 : 49] for the forgiveness of our sins and you see how Peter connected it he told them to repent so that their sins might be forgiven he's not talking about healing anymore he's not talking about their present day challenges as great as they may be he's talking about their sin and he's saying this Jesus is the fulfillment of this promise in the Old Testament that the healing that this Savior would bring yes it would may he may overflow with healing of a broken bone or of a disease but more so he's going to heal us from the sickness of death and sin through forgiveness dying on the cross for us being raised from the dead so that he's able to give life to all who believe in him and so this is where Peter starts as he's saying don't you see Jesus is the fulfillment of this servant and he's saying and he's also the fulfillment of what Moses said that a prophet like him like Moses would come after him who would be greater than him and what did Moses do?

Moses led his people from slavery to Egypt into the joy and the freedom of the promised land this was the exodus right from captivity to freedom and this is what Jesus does again not from socio-political oppression but from the oppression of sin and the captivity that sin captures our hearts Jesus comes as a greater Moses to set us free from these things and it's not just setting us free for these things but these things are the fulfillment going back even further in the Old Testament to Abraham where we see in verse 24 and 25 all in your offspring all the families of the earth will be blessed and he's saying don't you see the blessing that you see on this man who is now walking and leaping and rejoicing in the temple this is just a foretaste of the blessing this is a little taste of the blessing that comes more fully through the salvation of people both Jew and Gentile not just the offspring of Abraham genetically but the offspring of Abraham who are like him because they believe in Jesus this is the blessing that God has brought this is the amazing sign do you want to see a sign friends this is what the Bible tells us above everything else a sign of healing or provision we praise God for it but Jesus is a greater sign and he has already lived and died and risen again we don't need to wonder what new thing he has to do he has already done everything that is sufficient for us that we may know his surpassing glory of this sign if all the healings and provisions and protections that God does which he does do in this world if they are like the stars in the sky

Jesus is the sun and his light it all fades we are eclipsed by the glory of this Jesus and this is why Peter wants us in light of the healing of a man who was lame from birth to respond not by saying give me more of that can I get more healing can I get more blessing can I get material blessing can I get more stuff here's the thing it's fine to ask for those things but it's better to ask for those things in the context of asking for the most important thing right that you may know Jesus and this is what Peter calls his first century audience to and what he calls us to today repent repent of being so focused on our physical comfort our current circumstances that we lose sight of the greatest sickness that we have which is our sin repent of our thinking that if we had those material blessings that we would finally be okay with God and turn to Jesus the Savior the blessing the sign that is greater than any other sign for us for our hope for our salvation for our good and for God's glory let's pray together

Lord we thank you that you are a God who is able to do immeasurably more than we ask or even imagine Lord we pray that you would open our eyes to see the glory in your salvation greater than all other blessings Lord we know you are a loving Father and you are abundant in your goodness Lord may we above all know your goodness in our salvation we pray these things in Jesus name Amen Amen